# STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2018

Comité consultatif pour l'environnement de la Baie James
James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) established the James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment (JBACE) to, among other things, advise responsible governments on the adoption of policies, laws, regulations or measures that might affect the biophysical or social environment of the Cree people. The Committee is also responsible for overseeing the administration and management of the environmental and social protection regime established pursuant to Section 22 of the JBNQA. Fulfilling this broad and diverse mandate necessarily entails challenges.

Ensuring that the Committee takes relevant action thus demands a clear reading of issues and accurate foresight in handling and framing them. The Committee operates with limited resources and counts on the collaboration of the parties to the JBNQA.

The purpose of the strategic planning process is therefore to better target the Committee's action and help develop an action plan.

# 2 BACKGROUND

Natural resource development – energy, mining, forestry – has brought significant changes to the James Bay Territory since the signing of the JBNQA. Even the JBNQA itself has considerably evolved in order to frame new hydroelectric development projects and implement a new adapted forest regime. Meanwhile, the essence of the environmental and social protection regime and, in particular, the impact assessment and review procedure established by the JBNQA have remained the same.

In the context of its first strategic plan, the JBACE initiated a reflection process on the need to modernize the environmental and social impact assessment and review procedure to make sure it continues to achieve its objectives in the face of new development projects. Another aim was to incorporate or assimilate best practices in keeping with international standards which have greatly evolved over the last 35 years. The Committee focused its efforts on updating the lists of development projects (schedules 1 and 2), public participation and strategic environmental assessment. It also concerned itself with the matter of climate change and adaptation.

The government's announcement about the development and implementation of a northern development policy points to a new boom in mining and energy development in the Territory, which will likely lead to economic growth that could also put increased pressure on the Territory's ecosystems and social environment. Consequently, we need to complete our reflection on modernizing the impact assessment and review procedure to strengthen stakeholders' trust in the institutions in charge of administering the procedure and making decisions on future projects.

## 3 THREE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Access to information, transparency and public participation as well as knowledge about issues affecting the Territory normally help to inform decisions. Apart from the environmental gain, projects have higher social acceptability when the public has access to data enabling an understanding of the ins and outs of the project. The James Bay communities must have access to environmental and social data in order to fully participate in discussions leading to decisions affecting their area. This is an important condition for minimizing the negative impacts of development, as provided for in the environmental and social protection regime (Section 22). In this context, the actions taken by the JBACE will be aimed at:

### *I. Greater transparency*

- Facilitate access to scientific data and information.
- Ensure the dissemination of quality and objective information.
- Strive to ensure that knowledge and studies are disseminated and written for the general public.
- Promote and support the establishment of a public registry.
- Promote improvements in the capacity of the evaluating and review committees' secretariats.
- Help make simultaneous translation services in Cree a part of consultation sessions.

## *II. Better knowledge of the Territory, its inhabitants and issues related to resource development and environmental conservation*

- Identify and document the major issues.
- Enhance our knowledge about the environment (scientific and local knowledge).
- Gain a better understanding of the cumulative impacts and the interactions of development.
- Gain a better understanding of the scope of JBNQA-related agreements and impact and benefit agreements with respect to environmental and social protection.
- Compile more information on uranium and other "radioactive" minerals.
- Foster learning from environmental monitoring programs.
- Propose new framework models for environmental monitoring programs.

## *III. Better communication with governments and increased public awareness regarding the assessment and review procedure of Section 22 of the JBNQA*

- Foster learning among communities to increase their participation in the project review process.
- Promote better understanding regarding the environmental and social impact assessment and review procedure.
- Raise awareness about the importance of putting the necessary tools in place to ensure the social acceptability of their projects.
- Step up coordination efforts between the JBACE and government agencies in order to better understand development issues in the Territory.